

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

## ASTRAL PHILOSOPHY.

THE OCCULT WORLD. By J. A. W. Bouton. 12mo. pp. 172. \$1.00.

One of the most remarkable things about Madame Blavatsky, the celebrated prophetess of the Theosophical Society, is her power of producing rappings and similar spiritual signals, not only on tables but within clock-shades and other cavernous bodies, including the human head. Something like this phenomenon appears to have started reverberations in the skull of A. P. Sinnett, esq. To a certain extent the subject of his book is indeed the mysterious learning indicated by the title, but the gaffes of Madame Blavatsky are really the chief inspiration of his pen, a description and discussion of her performances filling about two-thirds of its pages. The narratives are no doubt remarkable, but we need not dwell upon them, first because the wonders told by Mr. Sinnett do not differ in kind or degree from those related of spiritual mediums and jugglers; and secondly because these stories seem calculated to serve no practical purpose. Admitting the good faith of the narrators, the public have no means of knowing that they were competent observers, noting all the circumstances of each case accurately and reporting them exactly as they occurred, precise and complete testimony respecting the strange and the unknown being very hard to obtain. And there is the further and still stronger objection to the theosophical miracles that they cannot be cited as the proofs of any intelligible truth, and therefore can have no other effect upon the mind than to puzzle or entertain. When Peter and John healed the lame man it was to convince the world of the divinity of a new religion; but when Madame Blavatsky's familiar creates a tempest it is only to accommodate an unexpected guest at a picnic.

The doctrine of the Theosophical Society, so far as that organization has any doctrine, is that another society, which is nameless, has certain doctrines, which are not to be revealed. For ages there has existed a school of occult philosophy possessing a knowledge not only of esoteric religious truth but of tremendous physical forces which modern science does not even suspect. It flourishes at present chiefly in India, but it has permeated the whole East, and it penetrates now as far as Europe, may, as Colonel Olcott could testify, as far as America, Egyptian priests, Chaldean Magi, Gnostics, Essenes, Pythagoras, Plato, St. Paul, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, are mentioned among the adepts. As for the last-named, Mr. Sinnett finds it difficult to understand why the author of "Zamon" and "The Coming Race" should have been "content to use up his information as an ornament of fiction instead of giving it to the world in a form which should claim more serious consideration." Perhaps other people may not find the novelist's behavior so extraordinary. The adepts in the higher degrees are supposed to lead seclusive and contemplative lives, and to communicate with their disciples principally through occult agencies. They are far from desiring to thrust the truths of theosophy upon an unwilling world; on the contrary, they can hardly be coaxed into letting any of it out; and it is only on rare and special occasions that they consent even to the working of a wonder or so, for the satisfaction of the faithful. We regret to say that Colonel Olcott is not yet an adept, he is only, so to speak, a catechumen. Madame Blavatsky herself is not an adept. Mr. Sinnett, although "owing to a train of fortunate circumstances" he has come to "know" it is in this book, has never seen an adept. He has, however, been in correspondence with one, an Indian gentleman known as Koot Hoomi, who, having studied for some time in Europe, writes copious and long-winded English in a style so idiomatic as to be indistinguishable from Mr. Sinnett's own. "The more my readers may be acquainted with India," judiciously remarks Mr. Sinnett, "the less they will be willing to believe, except on the most positive testimony, that the letters from Koot Hoomi, as I now publish them, have been written by a native of India." He proceeds accordingly to make the testimony positive by saying that the fact "is beyond dispute." The most exacting sceptic could ask nothing more positive than that. When Mr. Sinnett wishes to communicate with the sage, he gives his letter to Madame Blavatsky, and she causes it, "occultism only knows how," to be instantaneously conveyed to Koot Hoomi in Tibet. His replies, which are fifty pages long and immeasurably deep, are sometimes found on Mr. Sinnett's hall-table, sometimes in Mr. Sinnett's napkin, and occasionally they come by post. They leave something to be desired in the way of precise information, but they are delightfully ingenious. Mr. Sinnett, for example, asked for a test miracle, proposing as an absolutely conclusive piece of evidence the production in his presence in India of a copy of *The London Times* of that day's date. But Koot Hoomi replied that the test was inadmissible, "precisely because it would close the mouths of the sceptics;" the world was not prepared for the truth; every one who witnessed the miracle "would be thrown off his balance, and the result would be deplorable." It would be especially disastrous to Mr. Sinnett and Madame Blavatsky because it would make them notorious, and that of course they would not like. Evidently Koot Hoomi is a discreditable considerate person.

It is difficult to say what the occult Brothers may not be able to do, through their familiarity with hidden forces of nature, but the powers of theirs which appear to have particularly impressed Mr. Sinnett are considerable. Among them are occultic limitations of time, place, material objects, etc. They can communicate with one another at any moment, though separated by the whole width of the world, doing this by a simple exercise of will or a psychological process. They enjoy a degree of clairvoyance which makes them particularly omniscient in mundane affairs. They can transport themselves over vast distances in the twinkling of a bedpost. They can cause solid material objects to pass through other solids. Receiving closed letters, they can read them without opening them, and can write the answers, prepare to express, or precipitate a written answer on the inside. These magic feats are performed by means of familiarity with a force in nature which outsiders know nothing about. Mr. Sinnett says that it is referred to in Sanscrit writings as "akar." It would be interesting to have a more definite record of the "akar" which "works" in India. It is known, however, that the name of the Brother who may be thousands of miles distant, is then disintegrated into infinitely minute particles, is conveined in that condition by "currents," is passed through other matter if any intervenes, and is finally restored to its original condition. If this writer's explanation of the matter satisfies you, many reader, it can only be because the union of his mind with the minds of the adepts is "prevented by its induced incapabilities." Doubtless there are even scoffers who will find fault with the statement of Koot Hoomi that the result of the highest intelligence in the occult world is the evolution of a sublimated form of spirituality, which, in the cosmic action, is productive of immeasurable results"; so that the complete adept having "made himself a centre from which irradiate potentialities that bear correlations upon correlations." Every one, however, is able to project into material existence in the visible world the form that his imagination has constructed out of inert cosmic matter in the invisible world."

These things are so, it is perhaps not surprising that "the adept can project his soul out of his body to any place, and bring it back again." The author of "akar" and Mr. Sinnett very neatly remarks that "as an incidental discovery," he has thus ascertained beyond all shadow of doubt "that he really has got a soul." What is here called the soul seems to be that "inner ethereal self," the man as distinguished from his body, which occultists call the "astral body," and which is the envelop of some-thing that is not material, but is nevertheless the philosophy of Mr. Sinnett's treatise too much for our "induced incapabilities." He says that the "astral" inner self is material and perishable, and the innermost self, the inside soul it may use the expression is pure spirit. But he quotes with entire approval the statement of Madame Blavatsky, that the astral body is not material, but an illusion of matter," and the declaration of Koot Hoomi, that the only spirits the Brothers believe in are "the higher planetary spirits." So whether the soul is matter, or spirit, or illusion, and whether the soul of the adept is material or etherial, it is not important either, and whether the adept does or does not project his soul out of his body when he projects an illusion, and whether he has or has not ascertained beyond a shadow of doubt that he really has got a soul, that he has got an illusion of matter."

He studies the occult, and often gets into difficulties which no fellow can fathom. A brief chapter on "The Teachings of Occult Philosophy" is appended to the volume. This is not a reservoir of light, it is only an abridgement of parts of Madame Blavatsky's ponderous "Isis Unveiled," and so far

as any philosophical or religious system can be made out of it the teachings are merely Buddhism. This ancient faith can be studied more profitably, it seems to us, in the works of scholars who know more about it than Mr. Sinnett has been able to pick up.

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